

MARYLAND BRIEFING

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Transgender Referendum Fought

Proponents of broad new protections for transgender individuals in Montgomery County were back in court yesterday, trying to block a referendum that seeks to repeal the law passed last fall by the County Council.

Lawyers for Equality Maryland and Lambda Legal — gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender advocacy groups — asked a Circuit Court judge to invalidate the referendum, certified by the Board of Elections in March. Foes of the law kept it from taking effect by collecting more than 25,000 signatures to qualify for November's ballot. Citizens for Responsible Government contends that the law would give cross-dressing men access to women's locker rooms.

The contest to be played out in court concerns the validity of petition signatures. Jonathan Shurberg, an Equality Maryland attorney, said blocking the law was an act so drastic that valid signatures must meet the high standard of including full names as they appear on the state voter register.

Board of Elections attorney Kevin Karpinski said the county followed the guidelines of the state Board of Elections, which has filed a brief siding with the county.

— Ann E. Marimow